
Education Committee

SSB 6016

Brief Description: Regarding educator training to enhance skills of students with dyslexia.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Benton, McAuliffe, Swecker, McDermott, Roach, Delvin, Stevens, Honeyford, McCaslin, Morton and Shin).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Tasks the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, within available resources, with developing an educator training program to enhance the reading, writing, and spelling skills of students with dyslexia and a dyslexia handbook and posting both the training program and the handbook on its website.
- Provides that the training program may be regionally delivered through the educational service districts (ESDs), and permits the ESDs to seek assistance from an international nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting efforts to provide appropriate identification of and instruction for individuals with dyslexia.
- Requires ESDs to report to the OSPI, and the OSPI to report to the Legislature, regarding the number of individuals who participate in the training.

Hearing Date: 3/24/09

Staff: Cece Clynch (786-7195)

Background:

Dyslexia, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) which is one of the National Institutes of Health, is a brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to read. These individuals typically read at levels significantly lower than expected despite having normal intelligence. Although the disorder varies from person to person, common characteristics among people with dyslexia are difficulty with spelling, phonological processing (the manipulation of sounds), and/or rapid visual-verbal

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responding. It can be inherited in some families, and studies have identified a number of genes that may predispose an individual to developing dyslexia.

The usual course of treatment is to modify teaching methods and the educational environment to meet the specific needs of the individual with dyslexia. According to NINDS, the prognosis is generally good for individuals whose dyslexia is identified early, who have supportive family and friends and a strong self-image, and who are involved in a proper remediation program.

In 2005, the Legislature created and provided funds during the 2005-2007 biennium for the Lorraine Wojahn Dyslexia Pilot Reading Program. Funding was continued in the 2007-2009 biennium. The purpose was threefold:

1. To provide financial support to four schools in the state to implement effective intervention programs for students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia;
2. To provide professional development in the area of dyslexia and training on effective intervention programs; and
3. To build capacity and sustainability among leadership and teaching staff within a three-tiered school system.

The Bremerton, Mt. Adams, Tacoma, and Tumwater school districts received grant funds in 2005-2007. In 2007-2009, Bremerton, East Valley, Hoquiam, and Walla Walla school districts received grant funds. A December 2008 report by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to the Legislature indicates that, of the students who received services in 2007-2008, approximately 40 percent met standard on the Reading WASL in 2008, whereas approximately 17 percent of the same students met standard on the Reading WASL in 2007.

The report included several recommendations and next steps:

- provide five full-day professional development sessions on the topic of dyslexia and intervention implementation to schools K-12;
- collaborate with and train educational service district (ESD) reading specialists on the topic of dyslexia and effective practice so that ESD reading specialists may offer professional development;
- develop a dyslexia handbook for the state;
- update and maintain the OSPI website in order to provide resources;
- offer full-day dyslexia summits and conferences in collaboration with the Washington Branch of the International Dyslexia Association and invite renowned researchers in the field to participate; and
- support part-time dyslexia specialist/program manager and support staff within OSPI.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature intends to sustain the work of the dyslexia pilot projects and expand the implementation to a level of statewide support by developing and providing information and training, including a handbook to continue to improve the skills of students with dyslexia.

Within available resources, the OSPI must develop an educator training program to enhance the academic skills of students with dyslexia by implementing the findings of the dyslexia pilot program. The training program must be posted on the website of the OSPI and may be regionally delivered through the ESDs. Beginning September 1, 2009, the ESDs must annually

report to the OSPI the number of individuals who participate in the ESD training. The OSPI must report that information to the legislative education committees.

The OSPI must develop a dyslexia handbook to be used as a reference for teachers and parents of students with dyslexia. The handbook must be modeled after other state dyslexia handbooks. The OSPI must post the handbook on its website.

When developing the educator training program and the handbook, the OSPI must consult the school districts that participated in the dyslexia pilot programs and an international non-profit organization dedicated to supporting identification of and instruction for individuals with dyslexia. The ESDs may seek assistance from the international non-profit organization to deliver the training.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.